Melting the Ice-Gods: The Creation and Destruction of Old and New Gods in British Fiction 1880-1960

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Abstract: This article discusses the genre of prehistoric science fiction and its exploration of notions of the genesis of religion and the identities of old gods and goddesses from 1880 to 1960. Beginning with the contemporary anthropological context (Edward Tylor, James George Frazer, Sigmund Freud, Jane Harrison and Margaret Murray and their speculations on deities from Mithra to Isis) it then discusses both obscure and canonical science fiction texts, many of them little known or never before discussed in the context of theological history. Authors whose work is considered include Andrew Lang, H.G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, Henry Rider Haggard, S. Fowler Wright, Henry Marriage Wallis, Naomi Mitchison, and William Golding. The article draws attention to the gendered implications of imagining ancient deities, with goddess fictions significantly more optimistic than those about gods: the shape of things to come in both the practice of modern pagan religion worldwide and the decline of Christian practice in Britain. Fictions of old gods emphasise pessimism, despair and human fallibility and even sometimes conclude with outright atheism; fictions of old goddesses feature heroic and sympathetic protagonists and can offer a satisfying and harmonious alternative to Christianity. The earth, mother and virgin goddesses who emerge from these fictions went on to shape both contemporary literature and contemporary religion. Indeed, one has even shaped modern science: William Golding's goddess Oa, who inspired James Lovelock's Gaia, symbol of the earth as a self-sustaining system. These apparently obscure and ephemeral texts thus throw new light on the religious politics of late Victorian

and early twentieth century Britain, as writers recreated old gods and goddesses for new times.

Article:

Some writers have assured us that, in the words of Palgrave, 'We must give it up, that speechless past... lost is lost; gone is gone forever'. While if others, more hopefully, have endeavoured to reconstruct the story of the past, they have too often allowed imagination to usurp the place of research, and written rather in the spirit of the novelist, than in that of the philosopher.

John Lubbock, *Pre-Historic Times*

In the late Victorian period, definitions of the past had changed beyond recognition from those of the mid-nineteenth century. Scientists, theologians, philosophers and John Lubbock's least favoured category of writer, novelists, all had to change their thinking and writing about the deep past. New names had to be found for those periods once regarded as non-existent, dating to before the creation of the world. The 'Palaeolithic' was fixed as the proper term for the earliest period of human history by Lubbock in 1860 and as it settled into use writers began imagining what it must have been like to live this newly-made age. The term 'Palaeolithic' carried with it notions of progress to come, and therefore questions about the age and form of cultural rules. How did customs, laws and institutions develop? What were the period's politics of sex, tribe, class and age? Especially, what might be imagined about Palaeolithic religion if the Book of Genesis had not got it right? The Palaeolithic, therefore – an entirely new, old age – was the focus of late Victorian and early twentieth-century fictions about old gods and goddesses, and this article explores their relationship with the religious politics of the *fin de siècle* and beyond. Among writers' inventions were a series of old gods and goddesses who neatly exemplified the problems of belief and doubt in the

late Victorian period, and lasted into the mid-twentieth century. Some, like Isis, Diana and Mithra were familiar; others were not.

'Philosophers' Set the Scene

Alongside the new archaeologists and biologists who had created the need for the Palaeolithic to be named were another new group: anthropologists. It was these who, in Lubbock's terms, produced the most novelistic accounts of Palaeolithic life. Anthropologists' outlook was determined by perceptions of change and difference within, and contacts between, societies across Britain's empire, so that stories – stories of development and encounter - were important to their work. And in telling these, they continued to draw on older narratives of paganism, offering wholly new conclusions. The first important figure in the creation of new, old gods was Edward Tylor.

Tylor made clear his belief that the past could be written about in terms of the present from the first page of his study *Primitive Culture* (1871) when he gave a definition of culture in terms of 'uniformity' (across civilisations) and 'evolution' (from 'primitive' to 'civilised', 'tribe' to 'nation'). Sameness, then, was the keynote even when discussing change. Charles Lyell's doctrine of 'uniformity' had argued that geological processes had operated in the past as they did in the present: the word uniformity thus suggested similarities between the Palaeolithic and the contemporary, in one field at least. Charles Darwin and others had likewise embedded the notion of 'evolution' in the public mind, explaining the presence and form of fossils and their endurance into the present age.[i] Tylor's belief in likeness across space and time was echoed and amplified by Lubbock, who – in a wonderful drawing together of Victorian preoccupations - likened modern 'primitive' peoples to living fossils whose counterparts were still to be found buried in the stratified 'soil' of the 'civilised' mind.[ii] Literary writers found that soil very fertile ground in which to grow stories and, as the

title of Lubbock's work *The Origin of Civilisation* suggested, they were interested not just in the Darwinian origin of their species but it in the beginnings of its cultural habits too.

The second important figure was James Frazer. From the 1880s he was working on theories of the 'Pre-Historic' development of religion which culminated in the publication of *The Golden Bough* in 1890. Frazer thought that early people had imagined the world to be governed by laws that might be manipulated by magic. But once they had realised that their magic did not always (indeed, ever) work, magicians became convinced that there were more powerful beings than themselves in control of the universe. They imagined them as human-like deities, who needed to be propitiated. The invention of gods and goddesses thus involved a loss of power for humankind, and introduced the notion of subjection, 'an attitude of lowliest prostration' to beings who were super-magicians.[iii] Frazer imagined the 'savage' priest as a literary character defending his religion against a sceptic:

> 'Can anything be plainer', he might say, 'than that I light my twopenny candle on earth and that the sun then kindles his great fire in heaven? I should be glad to know whether, when I have put on my green robe in spring, the trees do not afterwards do the same? These are facts patent to everybody, and on them I take my stand. I am a plain practical man, not one of your theorists and splitters of hairs and choppers of logic... Give me leave to stick to facts; then I know where I am'

Yet for all his interest in the deepest past, Frazer gave his priest a voice familiar to readers: he sounds like Jerome K. Jerome's incompetent suburban patriarch Uncle Podger or the Grossmiths' pretentious Mr. Pooter, both characters from the 1880s. Frazer saw the origin of modern religiosity in these limited little men, and further argued that sometime in the Palaeolithic they were identified as embodying the god himself, through temporary or permanent spirit-possession. This gave them and their worshippers an apparently powerful

means of controlling their world. The narrowness and illogicality that Frazer disliked in Victorian Christianity thus had their origin in old, human gods.[iv]

Yet the all-powerful figure in Frazer's priest-god's world was really the goddess, a deity with whom the god was mated to ensure the fertility of vegetation. At Nemi in Italy, his type-site, it was Diana, Frazer thought. To suit his preferences he morphed the chaste goddess of the woods into a fertile mother goddess, the spirit of plants, 'the ideal and embodiment of the wild life of nature'.[v] There was a significant drawback for the priestly Pooters in being the goddess' husband, however: eventually their strength would fail. It would be time to pass on the god's soul, and thus the spirit of the natural world, to another body. This body would be the goddess' new lover, since it was her fertility that must be ensured. So the mortal god would be killed; and Frazer did not seem to pity his fate much.[vi] In some myths, the goddess too was unmoved by her lover's death, absorbed in her own ecstatic sexuality; in others she was distraught and sought his body in order to grant it renewed life. Such a story was that of the Egyptian goddess Isis, who tracked down (almost) every part of her husband Osiris and reanimated him. Frazer was particularly struck by Isis, a wifely and kindly goddess unlike the 'dissolute' Astarte and Cybele or the cruel Diana. Her 'beautiful Madonna-like figure' was ornamented with virtues, 'graces' and 'sweets', to create a goddess of 'superb efflorescence', he wrote, the 'beneficent queen of nature', 'like a star in a stormy sky'.[vii]

Frazer was officially a Christian, of course, but he clearly liked much of what he imagined in Isis, whilst other elements of prehistoric religion both fascinated and repulsed him. He did not favour 'the bloody orgies of the Asiatic goddess', preferring the 'good taste and humanity' of the Greeks. Yet he disliked modern Christian asceticism and withdrawal from society, preferring as a god 'the patriot and hero who, forgetful of self, lives and is ready to die for the good of his country'. Mithraism thus appealed because it had 'a solemn ritual with aspirations after moral purity and a hope of immortality' and Frazer drew attention to the likeness of

Mithra, the sun, to Christ the Sun of Righteousness. He respected Christ and Buddha, 'two beautiful spirits...like beings come from a better world' (note the lack of conviction that they actually *did* come from a better world) but argued that 'the world cannot live at the level of its great men'. At the end of *The Golden Bough*, conventional Christian certainties have disappeared despite Frazer's evasions: Christ was merely a human being drawn into the cultural pattern of pre-existent religions; there had been many gods, sons of gods and redeemers; there always would be.[viii] The paganism that Frazer offered as the pattern of all religion was often beautiful, often repellent but it appeared as an inevitable outcome of human nature sketched in the Palaeolithic and filled out in human history into his own time.

Frazer's work was built upon by two female scholars of very different kinds but each delighted by the idea of ecstatic worship of god *and* goddess. The first, Jane Harrison, was working along the same lines as Frazer but with an emphasis on the cultic origin of Greek drama. Harrison revolutionised understanding of Greek paganism in her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* and *Themis*, and refocused it around the 'eniautos-daimon' or spirit of the agricultural year – also, the spirit of the group who farmed, lived and celebrated the agricultural cycle. In this society goddess-worship was key: 'Themis, as the Mother' was the centre of a matrilineal culture that pre-dated patriarchy.[ix] Meanwhile, the Egyptologist Margaret Murray suggested that a religion of god and goddess had survived in Britain for centuries after its supposed extinction by Christianity. Among others, witches had practised it. Like her contemporaries, Murray thought this Frazerian religion dated back to the earliest times: it was enough to say that 'whether the religion which survived as the witch cult was the same as the religion of the Druids, or whether it belonged to a still earlier stratum, is not clear'.[x] Thus Frazerian religion was accepted and refined by fellow-scholars until its existence was unquestioned.

The final key development in the late Victorian discussion of early deities that structured new literary work was the theory of totemism and taboo. It found its punchiest statement in the work of the therapist Sigmund Freud, but he was building on the work of Andrew Lang and James Frazer (among others) in the 1880s and early 1900s.[xi] Frazer, Freud and his fellow-workers on taboo put flesh on the bones of Palaeolithic people. By likening them to Australasian, Pacific or African tribes, they imagined their familial structures and everyday habits and attempted to draw large conclusions about the origin of modern beliefs.[xii] In Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910) and Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1918 English translation) they examined the idea of taboo – forbiddeness but also sacredness – in early society, arguing that modern aversions and neuroses preserved memories of prehistoric belief.[xiii] For Freud (and for Frazer to a lesser extent), the sexual politics of religion was the key factor in the formation of early human societies. Freud also investigated Tylor's ideas about animism as an early religious impulse, the notion that the natural world and animals were imbued by 'primitive' peoples with a spirit like the human soul. Totemic societies divided themselves into clans symbolised by a particular animal, which was also thought to be their ancestor and deity. Killing the animal was taboo, as was sex with any member of the same clan. Tribespeople were thus forced to look outside their immediate society for a partner (exogamy). An individual might also have a totem animal, which was part of the rites of passage of his or her life. Whilst Freud was keen to state that 'the reader need not fear that psychoanalysis... will be tempted to derive anything so complicated as religion from a single source' the notions of totem and taboo would play a large part in theories of religion's origin.[xiv] For the key thinkers of this group, then, the notion of deity was formed in the Palaeolithic: creative writers were to find inspiration in this simple new idea, but also profound anxiety.

‘Novelists’ Respond

The contemplation of the ‘Pre-Historic’ past, then, seemed to offer new access to truths about the origin of present-day religious rites. But it also raised questions about the uniqueness and divine design of Christianity. Discovering the origin of the idea of deity thus also seemed to involve destroying it: the dawn of the gods was also their twilight. The implications were so troubling that contemporary debate about the validity of religion began to be conducted through awkwardly polemical fictions about prehistory as well as in essays and treatises. Writers imagined that there been prehistoric Nonconformists and Tractarians but, most pressingly, freethinkers and atheists as well.

This debate was a peculiarly British one. ‘Post-Darwinian’ prehistoric fiction began in France, with a few novels of the 1870s offering heroic depictions of France’s ‘Celtic’ and ‘Aryan’ ancestors. The first of these to be translated into English, as Nicholas Ruddick has documented, was Elie Berthet’s *Romans Préhistoriques: Le Monde Inconnu* (1876, translated in 1879 as *The Pre-Historic World*).[xv] But in Britain the first modern fiction of prehistory was written in a very different spirit, as if in answer to the excesses of the French romances. It was a short story, ‘The Romance of the First Radical’; its author was Andrew Lang, the Scottish anthropologist and folklorist. ‘The Romance of the First Radical’ begins a dialogue between the positions developing in late Victorian Britain that religion was either a good and natural phenomenon or a wicked forgery, designed to oppress and delude. Yet far from being a tale of high seriousness, the ‘Romance’ of the title was a satirical one. The story dealt with Why-Why, the first man who ‘reviled against the despotism of unintelligible customs, who asserted the rights of the individual against the claims of the tribal conscience’. He was inclined to think the customs of his tribe were ‘"bosh-bosh", to use the early reduplicative language of these remote times’. He

> had always been informed that a serpent was the mother of his race, and that he must treat serpents with the greatest reverence. To kill one was sacrilege. In spite of this, he stole out, unobserved, and crushed a viper which had stung his little brother. He noticed that no harm ensued... He became suspicious of all the ideas and customs imposed by the old men and wizards.

For this offence against totem and taboo, Why-Why is accused of heresy. His career of religious scepticism progresses through a violation of tribal burial customs, and eventually he commits the ultimate heretical act by marrying a fellow-worshipper of the serpent god. For breaking this taboo he and his wife are executed. The story ends with the tribe repenting their act and forswearing 'the follies of the medicine-men', but not before Lang has enjoyed several digs at contemporary society and especially Victorian religion.

Readers cannot help noticing that the tribal medicine-man's belief in 'the bad black-fellow with a tail who lives under the earth' is very like the simpler Christian conceptions of Satan, or Lang's sly likening of Why-Why to more recent radicals like John Stuart Mill and Percy Shelley. The story's last line offers an equivocal comment on the most contemporary religious radicalism, suggesting that 'our advance in liberty is due to an army of forgotten Radical martyrs of whom we know less than we do of Mr. Bradlaugh'.[xvi] Charles Bradlaugh was the recently-elected atheist M.P. for Northampton, who was refusing to swear the compulsory Oath of Allegiance to the Queen because it contained the phrase 'so help me God'. From its outset, then, late Victorian prehistoric fiction set itself to explore notions of religion in a way that dramatised contemporary debate. As an anthropologist on the one hand and a poet and literary critic on the other, Lang was ideally placed to explore the points of connection between fiction and scientific writing – so much so that Julie Sparks describes his short story as belonging to both genres – and that made him an ideal beginner of the post-Darwinian poetics of the old gods.[xvii]

A similar critical engagement with religion can be found in H.G. Wells *A Story of the Stone Age* (1897). Wells's novella (originally published in parts) tells a suspenseful tale of Ugh-lomi and Eudena, fugitives from a cannibal tribe. However, in the course of their persecution of the couple, the tribe invent a semi-totemic religion. Believing their former leader Uya, whom Ugh-lomi had killed, to have been reincarnated as a lion, they leave him offerings - including Eudena. When Ugh-lomi kills the lion and rescues Eudena, they begin to leave pieces of meat in the belief that the lion is still alive and demanding revenge on Ugh-lomi:

> they took the ashen stake with the meat upon it and thrust it into the ground. "Uya!" cried Siss, "behold thy portion. And Ugh-lomi we have slain. Of a truth we have slain Ugh-lomi. This day we slew Ugh-lomi, and to-morrow we will bring his body to you." And the others repeated the words.

Their Uya religion is a false one in every way, however. Not only do the tribe lie in their worship – they have not killed Ugh-lomi – but the entire concept of the divine lion is the idea of a malicious old woman who invents it as part of her bid to dominate the tribe. Uya, says Wells chillingly, 'had let her live beyond the age to which it is seemly a woman should be permitted to live', and this cunning crone's religion is rejected when she is killed by the hero.[xviii] Casually polemical, Wells' story from his most atheistical period invents a new totemic animal-god, Uya, but simultaneously destroys him, his priesthood and cult.

Rudyard Kipling's short story 'The Knife and the Naked Chalk' from *Rewards and Fairies* (1910) echoes many of the concerns of Lang and Wells about man-made religion. His approach is to interrogate the ideas in a story of euhemerism, the creation of a Norse god (Tyr) from a human being. His time period is rather vague. It is 'The Neolithic Age' as sketched in Kipling's witty poem of that title, which includes the Upper Palaeolithic Solutrean culture *and* the Iron Age Allobroges culture for good measure.[xix] In Kipling's story,

different tribes are living in different 'ages': the unnamed hero fetches his iron from a neighbouring tribe, the wood-dwelling Children of the Night, at the cost of losing his eye. But his tribe make the mistake of deifying the iron-bringer. And they do it despite his protests that 'we talk too much about Gods'. After deification the man is treated, he laments, like one of 'the Old Dead in the Barrows'. His tribe sing hymns to him: 'this is the Buyer of the Blade – be afraid! This is the Great God Tyr!' 'Oh poor, poor God!' sympathises the storyteller Puck, but there is no escape from deity. Becoming a god is not a triumph of will but a misfortune requiring further self-sacrifice – not of life, as in Frazer, but of happiness. Kipling dramatises the disorientating realisation that god is in oneself. Yet in this case, the bringer of the iron knows even this potential comfort to be a lie. [xx]

A similar fate afflicts the hero of Henry Rider Haggard's *Allan and the Ice Gods*, a story in his Allan Quatermain series, from 1927. Here, the adventurer-hero Quatermain takes an African drug and finds himself living through a vision of his prehistoric forefather, Wi the Hunter. Wi's tribe worship ice gods, 'terrible powers to be feared' who dwell in the glaciers. Two of them are especially visible, and with his modern mind Quatermain can see they are a man and a mammoth frozen in the ice, the creature pursuing his former hunter. But his prehistoric avatar Wi sets the tone of the book's dark and complex religious politics when he offers his own exegesis of their meaning:

> Behold the gods hunting man, who flees and screams, filled with the terror of he knows not what, till they have him by the throat.

The book follows Wi's loss of faith in the ice gods until, like his slave Pag the Sceptic, he regards their priest as 'a cheat and a liar' and is unsurprised when the priest and believers are killed in a sudden glacial collapse as if by their own false gods. He himself, as Quatermain sums up, adopts a 'higher religion' centring on an afterlife in the sky, and eventually offers

himself up as a sacrifice to help his people. Quatermain's fellow-time-traveller describes Wi as a 'Christian martyr', but the book is not satisfied with this simple reading. Its central message seems instead to be Wi's unhopeful insight that the ice gods were 'naught but the Evil in [the people's] own hearts given form and name, and that the Unknown One whom now he worshipped was the Good in their hearts'. This cannot save his people from death or Wi himself from a flight south as the ice age swallows his world.[xxi] Neither godlessness nor trust in savage nature deities and their sly priests offers the reader any hope at all.

This bleak ending suggests the development and entrenching since 1880 of a compulsive questioning of the very notion of deity. More specifically, it embodies the religious despair that afflicted many writers in the years after the first world war; a habit of mind that, as Richard Overy has shown in *The Morbid Age*, lasted through the 1930s.[xxii] Fictions of prehistoric deities mapped out this mood of Depression, so that equally problematic gods inhabit the accountant Sydney Fowler-Wright's peculiar prehistoric romance *Dream* (1931). Here the tribe's god is a totemic alligator, whose priestess Thekla wears a reptile skin, deer horns and a luminous stone as sign of her status. The tribe used to feed its god on surplus babies and the unwanted old or maimed – one way of dealing with economic crisis - but the god also ate the previous priest after he offended the tribe's king.[xxiii] Quickly, a new doctrine is pioneered by Thekla. She continues to feed the god, but uses the rite as a means to control tribal politics for herself, killing the protagonists one by one. Once again, issues of authority are debated – kings, priests and priestesses are carnivorous by association with gods who, in the form of lions, mammoths or alligators, hunt human beings. Much of prehistoric fiction of the period 1880-1940, then, is a wasteland where religions of poly- and monotheism, nature worship and the worship of good itself are all tested and found empty of either comfort or narrative certainty.[xxiv] Old gods are as false as modern ones for these novelists.

The Religion of the Writers

That the five writers discussed here took a wide range of religious positions in their lives is indicative of the depth of religious turmoil in the period and the compulsion to work it out in relation to obsolete prehistoric gods and goddesses. Lang wrote extensively on the history of religion, especially in *Myth, Ritual and Religion* (1886) and *The Making of Religion* (1898). Responding in the latter to the notion that deities had originated in the idea of spirits, debated by Frazer, Grant Allen and Frank Jevons among others, he argued that early humans had firstly imagined a 'powerful and beneficent Maker or Father' and only later turned to deities who played 'silly and obscene tricks' like the Greek gods. 'Higher' deities might not, then, have evolved from spirits, dreams or ghosts; indeed, it was more likely that god-kings and spirits were degenerations from them. He thought that many religious phenomena could be explained by 'freakish' abilities of thought-transference or clairvoyance and urged anthropologists to study psychical researchers' reports. But beyond all that lay an ineradicable wish to believe in the reality of a god, and Lang ended his Gifford Lectures series of 1889-90 by explaining 'primitive' people's knowledge of a good and dignified god. He quoted St. Paul: 'that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them'.[xxv] Early religion was revealed by the Christian god himself, or so Lang hoped.

H.G. Wells, in contrast, was for much of his life famously anti-Christian in his social Darwinism. Raised on the library of the Uppark freethinker Sir Harry Fetherstonehaugh and the teachings of Thomas Huxley, he was regarded as an egregious example of prejudiced atheism by his critics, like Hilaire Belloc. Wills B. Glover sees him as a 'caricature of a scientific humanism' during this period of his life.[xxvi] But in 1908 he expressed a new need for faith because 'I cannot contemplate an ineffectual life patiently... I assert... that I am

important in a scheme, that the wheel-smashed frog in the road and the fly drowning in the milk are important and correlated with me'. There had to be a scheme, though he was not ready to imagine a 'schemer'. Eventually, he had to do so: in the years after the first world war he evolved the concept of a 'personal' God out of aspects of several world religions, theosophy and anything that he personally thought true. Religion, he argued in 1917, filled a 'God-shaped blank' in atheism and was acceptable if it could be dragged away from 'the idolatry of altars, away from the obscene rites of circumcision and symbolical cannibalism, beyond the sway of the ceremonial priest'. This was all part of the 'persistent wickedness' of humankind, an 'evil and corruption' that Glover rightly notes he saw as 'a carry-over from [Man's] subhuman ancestors'. For Wells, god lay in 'freedom' to believe as one saw fit, but a kind of god did exist; indeed William Archer accused Wells of trying to become that god's apostle.[xxvii]

Kipling has been variously described as a Deist, a hoverer between Christianity, Hinduism and Islam , a Christian fixated by Old Testament tribal law, and an unbeliever. He was an inconsistent writer, often undermining his own stories by playing with the reader's perception or sympathies, and his religious sense seems to have been consistent only in its sense of trouble and strain. By the 1940s, his damaging upbringing by a violently Christian guardian was known – from his memoirs – and was being discussed as a factor in his complex attitude to religion. Seen in this light, his portrayal of the self-sacrificing human god denying his own deity looks like a way of expressing profound scepticism about deity's incarnate presence in the world, its purpose and character.[xxviii] But Kipling's feeling seems to be that sacrifices are still worth making: the story, overtly a story for children, thus dramatises a painful struggle between belief and unbelief.[xxix]

If not a god, then at least great natural forces might account for the vicissitudes of human life. Fowler Wright, the son of a Baptist preacher, was a freethinker and worked out for himself such a cosmology. It was as pessimistic as that of Wells in its predictions for humanity. In *The New Gods Lead*, Fowler Wright stated that the 'new gods' were 'comfort and cowardice': society was being guided by its weakest members 'from below', into a 'blind leaderless self-slavery'. What was needed was strong leadership. Yet both Christians and utopians were wrong to think this could lead to a perfect world: endless struggle was the only future for human beings. The odds were also stacked against them in Fowler Wright's world. In his most famous work, *Deluge*, a global flood destroys civilisation and humans are the mercy of its uncontrollable might.[xxx]. Mary Weinkauf sees Wright drawing on his Baptist past in attempting to deliver post-Christian 'sermons', but for her they amount to little more than 'cranky' opinions on the evils of abortion, motor cars and the loss of individual freedom which intrude into his later fiction. In his gloom, Wright is most like Wells in full atheist-Darwinian mode.[xxxi]

Perhaps the most interesting of the five is Haggard who, as Ronald Hutton has documented, was a devout bible-reading churchwarden but also explored theosophy and Egyptian and Nordic paganism.[xxxii] This yearning for religious experience is strongly present in his work, despite its often gloomy frustration. John Senior shows how Haggard explored spiritualism, ghosts and past lives in the 1920s, attempting to reconcile Christianity with the notion of reincarnation in the years leading up to *Allan and the Ice-Gods*.[xxxiii] Yet he had always been attracted by paganism: 'I venerate Isis and always feel inclined to bow before the moon!' he wrote in his autobiography. It is this strain of Frazerian thought that leads him to create Wi's teacher Laleela in *Allan and the Ice Gods*, as well, arguably, as Ayesha in *She*.[xxxiv] It is Laleela who brings Wi his 'higher' sky religion, because she is a moon-worshipper. She is also a character reincarnated in Haggard's other fiction as a priestess of Isis and, later, Lady

Ragnall, Quatermain's elusive and forbidden lover. It seems that Haggard played out in Allan, Wi and his other stoical adventurers a fatal attraction to goddesses and their seekers, figures like the theosophist Helena Blavatsky, whose *Isis Unveiled* appeared in 1877. Yet his male protagonists seem unable to trust or fully connect with this feminine mysticism – Wi cannot marry Laleela because he has sworn to take only one wife, and both she and Lady Ragnall die during the story. Deities from the pagan past are dismissed or whisked away - but the manly religion of self-sacrifice and self-denial that is left proves deeply unsatisfying.

Dawn of the goddess: an alternative spirituality

The dissatisfaction with masculine religion felt in Haggard's novel echoes similar chafing in several previous works. Its most interesting forebear, and one that has a completely different response to the atmosphere of religious crisis, is 'Ashton Hillers'' (Henry Marriage Wallis') 1910 *The Master-Girl*, a vigorously feminist story of the first female warrior and chieftain and discussed as such by Steve Trussel and Ruddick. But seen anew in the context of my exploration of the notion of deity in the period 1880 onward, Wallis' story offers more *spiritual* hope than any of the works explored so far: it decides to invest in the goddess and celebrate her power instead of sinking into gloomy suspicion. The 'master-girl', Deh-Yan, is so named because she is a 'governess' to the other girls of her tribe, all of whom are being brought up to a life of servitude to men who may not only beat but also eat them. Like others before and after her, this Jane Eyre tires of stitching clothes and gathering sticks, and rebels. In the process, she is sustained by her moon religion. The moon is a male deity, counterpart of the female sun god and Deh-Yan finds it inspirational in aspiring to masculine strength and power. But when she becomes Chieftainess, she founds an Amazonian religion of 'virgin priestesses' who celebrate their rites 'under the light of the New Moon in forest retreats, to which no man was ever admitted'. Deh-Yan is deified after her death – and her name is

clearly related to Diana, moon goddess, archer and Frazer's inspiration.[xxxv] Tacitly, *The Master-Girl* is Wallis' euhemeristic explanation for the goddess' attributes. The male moon god has been feminised, most successfully. Wallis' own religion perhaps helps to explain his optimistic embrace of female deity: he was a Quaker and the Society of Friends had some of the first female preachers and business managers in Britain. [xxxvi] Inspired by this, Wallis imagined a prehistoric equality greater than that of his own society, and gave it a religion that contained many of the seeds of goddess religion today.[xxxvii]

Other writers followed suit: Frederick Britten Austin wrote a number of short stories in *When Mankind was Young* (1927) exploring a feminine spirituality dating back to the earliest human times. In 'The Taming of the Brute', before humanity has even left the trees women are believed to control the 'fire-spirit' with magic words unknown to men and they use this power to 'tame' the men of their group - who are in many ways 'the brute' of the title. Austin calls the women 'the first... Feminist movement' and in a later story examines how their power grew into a story of 'Big Mother' who made the earth. Indeed, Austin dedicated *When Mankind was Young* to his mother.[xxxviii] He overtly genuflected to Frazer too in 'Isis of the Stone Age', a story in *Tomorrow* (1930). This 'Isis' is Star-of-Dawn, who is 'of the 'Blood'... sacredly descended from that vaguely omnipotent, primeval Great Mother, creatress of all things, inventress of all those multitudinous taboos'. Women drudge in her society but they are 'the sole recognised parent' and 'the really important sex' whilst men are 'essentially extraneous... the docile agent of her sacred will'. Star-of-Dawn is strong enough to remain a royal virgin for as long as she chooses. Even when she is surprised and captured by a stranger, she asserts herself to claim him forcefully as her husband. Unfortunately, he is of the same totemic clan and the tribe kill him, but not before he has fathered a daughter. As 'the Mother' and 'Holy One' she can revenge herself on his killer and have him dismembered in

his turn, and Star-of-Dawn invents agriculture in sowing grass seeds on the grave: result, Progress.[xxxix]

Another story of Neolithic goddess-feminism is Naomi Mitchison's epic *The Corn King and the Spring Queen*, an evocative novel of Frazerian paganism imagined in 1931 from 'my dear old *Golden Bough*' and the folktales of Lang. Here the god-king Tarrik and his queen-goddess Erif Der are the protagonists in their Black Sea kingdom: their shared rites are sexual and magical, and each also performs specific rites in a cultic house in order to ensure good luck and good harvest. At the annual Plowing Eve rite [*sic*] in March, people watch for 'signs of the godhead that was ripening in both of them'. Erif wears a 'white dress with hundreds and hundreds of little coloured wool flowers', and awaits her Corn King, who ploughs the field until he reaches her. 'I am the plow. It is my body' he announces. Erif embodies 'the hard, fallow field; the cold, reluctant spring'. Her life has indeed been hard, of late: last year's rite did not go well, her father has killed her child and her husband has murdered her brother. But suddenly she is 'unreasonably and beautifully glad'. She welcomes Tarrik, leaping over the ploughshare to him. 'All the growers of corn could look on the hard and upright sign of the godhead' as he parts his garments. The god and goddess have symbolic sex and the rite finishes with the community happy, orgiastic and drunk. Mitchison's heroine's name is 'red fire' reversed, suggesting the author's passionate, warm investment in her human goddess of community and fertility, and her socialist paganism is in the tradition of E. Belfort Bax, who in 1912 had proclaimed that 'socialism represents a return, with a difference, of course... to the pagan view of the world and of life'. For him, paganism and socialism meant 'the 'joy of life' as the right of all' and socialism was itself a religion. Ironically, since Bax loathed feminism, for Mitchison socialism was a religion of heroic human god *and* goddess.[xl]

For all the brutalities of their prehistoric worlds, then, these stories are much more positive in their depictions of religion than those focused on the traditional male protagonists – Wi, Ugh-lomi and the others, and their gods. The goddess religion of Diana and Isis is often seen to work for its female protagonists, providing comfort and direction in hard times, whilst masculine religion seems to have lost its way in a crisis projected back to the Palaeolithic gods. But the last decades of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century were not necessarily a morbid age for those writers willing to imagine a can-do goddess religion. Prehistory seemed to offer hope where modernity did not. Here is the socialist and sexual reformer Edward Carpenter, with a hauntingly beautiful vision of what he believed to have been the pagan 'primitive' religion of mankind and which he hoped would return. Once again, Man would feel connected to:

> The Sun or Sol, visible image of his very Soul, closest and most vital to him of all mortal things, occupying the illimitable heaven, feeding all with its life; the Moon, emblem and nurse of his own reflective thought, the conscious Man, measurer of Time, mirror of the Sun... the emergence of the perfect Man, towards whose birth all creation groans and travails – all these will return to become realities... The meaning of the old religions will come back to him. On the high tops once more gathering he will celebrate with naked dances the glory of the human form and the great procession of the stars, or greet the bright horn of the young moon which now after a hundred centuries comes back laden with such wondrous associations - all the yearnings and dreams and the wonderment of the generations of mankind – the worship of Astarte and of Diana, of Isis or the Virgin Mary...[xli]

Carpenter reviled civilisation, but he did not hate all religion too. In fact, he craved a revived version of the pagan deities. Once again it is goddesses who take the lead, especially Frazer's goddesses.[xlii]

Them and us: modern humans and other hominids

There was another genre of prehistoric stories running alongside the ones of early human society, however. This group focused on 'anatomically-modern' humans, as they are known today, and their relationships with Neanderthals. The Neanderthal stories are different from those discussed above because instead of explaining the origin of modern human beliefs and practices they focus on defining what they are *not*. The Neanderthal route is the 'path not taken' in human history for these writers, and it has religious aspects. Sometimes Neanderthals are introduced into the stories to allow the imagination of a world entirely without religion. This was one of their functions when H.G. Wells revisited the Palaeolithic for his 1921 story 'The Grisly Folk'. The 'Neanderthal'/ 'Mousterian' creatures in Wells' are more animal than human: 'not of our blood, not our ancestors', solitary, sinister and cannibal. In contrast, the narrator describes 'the true men' (modern humans) as capable of creating art and language. Wells identifies with 'the true men'. Indeed, they are the infancy of humanity:

> we can understand something of what was going on in their minds, those of us who can remember the fears, desires, fancies and superstitions of our childhood. Their moral struggles were ours – in cruder form.

In contemporary palaeo-anthropological writing this theory is crisply summed up as 'ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny' (the developmental processes of childhood repeat the 'infancy' of the species). The implication is that because of their 'moral struggles' when they 'grow up' the modern humans will develop religion and become 'us'. They will do so

through the rejection of the Neanderthal way, and through the civilizing female influence that creates social bonds, a theory Wells borrowed from James Jasper Atkinson's *Primal Law* (1903).[xliii] Somewhere in their future is the feminine spirituality that they will need to attain adulthood.

Aside from demonstrating that religion is part of a civilising culture (note the dramatic change from the story of Ugh-lomi, thirty years before), Wells' early European species may lack religion because by the 1920s fictions of prehistory had begun to absorb influences from Diffusionism. Diffusionism was a broad label for those who believed that developments such as farming had their origin in a specific location and were then diffused, by invasion or cultural exchange, across the world. The best-known explicator of Diffusionist ideas in the 1920s was Vere Gordon Childe, a highly influential archaeologist. Childe's *The Dawn of European Civilization* (1925) discussed the discovery of agricultural practices and their spread from the Near East. Within Diffusionism, however, was a group later named 'hyperdiffusionists' by the archaeologist Glyn Daniel. These were writers like the anatomist Grafton Elliot Smith and the anthropologist W.J. Perry, and they saw Egypt as the source of modern civilisation.[xliv] For Perry and Elliot Smith, religion did not exist before the civilization of 'the Children of the Sun' created it in Egypt, so it was not available to very early humans. As one of its mixed blessings, Elliot Smith argued, Egyptian civilisation invented kingship and then Egyptians deified their rulers. Early god-kings like Osiris were credited with bringing sun and rain, inundations and harvests. Thus religion was born euhemeristically, and with it rituals designed to honour and resurrect the god in seasonal festivals – we are back with Frazer again.[xlv] But Elliot Smith saw the development of religion as damaging to human happiness. For him, pre-civilised life was 'Arcadian' – 'Natural Man' embodied 'honesty and decency' without envy, malice or uncharity. Therefore 'he' did not

‘develop any customs or beliefs to hamper his freedom or restrain his actions. He was content to remain the genial and happy child of Nature’.[xlvi] Religion put an end to that.

The ‘Children of the Sun’ recur in prehistoric fiction, with the theory most closely followed in I.O Evans’ *The Coming of a King* (1950) where they are the antithesis of the Neanderthal. Here the Children are African immigrants, who show their new neighbours the way to farm grain and make all kinds of art and craft symbolic of civilisation and progress. Yet some of their adherents have perverted their religion into a sacrificial one, where those tested and found wanting must lose fingers as a rite of passage into manhood. The Children can thus bring both good and bad religion, depending on individual character and taste.[xlvii] This sacrificial superstition is the kind of religion attributed to early Neolithic people in Henry Treece’s *The Golden Strangers* (1956). Here religion is a dog-eat-dog horror. It is an Earth Mother religion, so that one might hope it had the redeeming features of the goddess faiths of Laleela or Deh-Yan. But it does not: instead, it demands continual human and animal sacrifice, a pointless waste of life and resource, and its adherents live in fear. To have ‘gone to the Earth Mother’ means to have been sacrificed on a stone altar. ‘At sowing time’ it is explained ‘she calls for a little drink, a little blood... one throat goes short so that a hundred throats be fed’. Yet the Children of the Sun, who come from the Baltic in this novel, bring a religion just as bloody in its sacrifices, where a Hornman (clearly based Murray’s horned god of the witches but this time a eunuch, just to add extra perversion) is dedicated to ‘death and the sun’. The Earth Mother’s people change to a sun religion, but it is no less vile than the previous one: as corpse after corpse proves. Only by retreating from organised religion altogether can a few fugitives be safe.[xlviii]

For the most extreme Diffusionists, imagining a religion of this sort arriving to afflict humanity, all religion was a disease. Adam Stout has explored how Diffusionist ideas grew in

opposition to the toxic rhetoric of race, religion and tribal hatred that seemed to them to have promoted the first world war. An emphasis on blood and sacrifice had led to the notion, they thought, that human life was worthless and that people should be willing to die in their millions in the service of meaningless tribal dogma.[xlix] Such ideas are explored in J. Leslie Mitchell's *Three Go Back* (1932) a story which transports three survivors of an airship crash back some 20,000-30,000 years to an Atlantean continent inhabited by both Neanderthals and modern humans.[l] The time-travellers bond with the modern humans or 'Cro-Magnons', but both early people are 'without religion' and they are not antagonistic. Indeed, the travellers' new friends are 'the most spiritual the world will ever see'. Without war, competition, hierarchy or ritual, they incarnate the Diffusionist belief that humans are essentially good and have been corrupted only by civilization. Inverting Nietzsche, Mitchell comments wittily that in his version of the Palaeolithic, God is not dead but happily 'yet unborn'.[li]

In these texts, Neanderthals are marginal to the story, introduced largely as a comparator with modern human beings. They are alike in some ways and in others wholly different. But in 1955 William Golding's *The Inheritors* provided a self-conscious 'writing back' to Wells' 'Grisly Folk' story in particular. He suggests two radical notions: that Neanderthals did practice a religion; and that it was a better one than anything invented by modern human beings. *The Inheritors* begins by quoting Wells – not 'The Grisly Folk', but *The Outline of History*, where Wells described Neanderthals as characterised by 'an extreme hairiness, an ugliness, or a repulsive strangeness' and the stuff that nightmares are made on. In a straight inversion, Golding's Neanderthals are sweet-natured goddess-worshipping communitarians. It is modern people who are selfish, predatory and unloving, even killing and eating Neanderthals.[lii] Their society is sick – an adult revisiting of Golding's dysfunctional society in *Lord of the Flies* (1954). To the Neanderthal woman Fa the 'new people's' inability to live well suggests that modern humans are unnatural: 'Oa did not bring them out of her belly', she

concludes, naming the Neanderthals' earth goddess. We might think of the new people as fallen, exhibiting all the ills that Milton listed at the end of *Paradise Lost*, a text which Golding kept revisiting.[liii]

The new people have a religion, based on Frazerian sympathetic magic. They draw and colour pictures of stags, and make an offering of a severed finger, chopped from one of their own men, to the artwork – reminiscent of Evans' Children of the Sun. One member of the tribe dresses in animal skins and dances as a shaman in his stag costume. His role is like that suggested for 'the sorcerer' figure painted at Les Trois Freres cave, on which he is clearly based, and may also have a debt to the antler headdresses discovered at Star Carr by the archaeologist Grahame Clark only about five years before Golding wrote.[liv] This stag-dressed man, who is probably the leader Marlan, presides over the finger offering. Hunters then fire arrows at the painted stag, to the accompaniment of clapping and chanting. They bow to the stag, too, propitiating it – as a stag god? We see the ritual through the Neanderthal man Lok's puzzled eyes and he finds the whole performance incomprehensible and wrong.[lv] It seems devoid of proper reverence, cruel and foolish. Indeed, all is not well with this religion. Despite their material riches these people are hungry. Later, obscurely, a Neanderthal child is sacrificed and eaten in a ceremony that we do not see or fully understand but which dominates the book: as James Gindin argues, their 'worship is not respect or devotion, but predatory propitiation'. After their bruising, brutal encounter with the Neanderthal group the group feel 'haunted, bedevilled, full of strange irrational grief'. Their cosmos is in confusion, 'untidy, hopeless, dirty' and their religion offers no help.[lvi]

Meanwhile the Neanderthals have their own religion based on the goddess Oa and including a semi-sacred object, 'the little Oa', a root that Lok found and judged to be shaped like a pregnant woman.[lvii] This suggests the 'big' Oa's imagined form. Oa manifests herself in snowmelt and fertility in spring, and in protection for all living things: in conversation with

John Carey, Golding likened Oa to Gaia, the goddess-name bestowed by the environmentalist James Lovelock on his hypothesis of 'the earth as a self-regulating system'. Indeed, Golding gave Lovelock the idea for this name so that Oa actually *is* Gaia.[lviii] With this goddess as their focus, the Neanderthals' world is thus whole and potent: animist, alive with deer that are Oa's children and ice-caves where the goddess inhabits 'ice women', bulbous and beautiful icicles. As the mother of all creatures, Oa is offended by deliberate killing and although the Neanderthals eat meat, they scavenge rather than hunting.[lix] Theirs is a kindly religion, not a would-be manipulator of natural forces like the modern humans'.[lx] Yet Oa is not the saviour of her people, even so: they will die out because it is inevitable. She may be a more ethically- and environmentally-pleasing deity but she does not help Lok any more than the modern humans' god helps them. Lok concludes that Oa and the new people are like each other – simply an irresistible blind force: 'nothing stands against them'.[lxi] In this way, Golding returns to the world of Lang and Haggard, and his ice-women of the goddess clearly recall Haggard's figures in the glacier in *Allan and the Ice-Gods*. As in Haggard's novel, women have a better access to religion than men do: 'religion belongs to the women... it is the women who have Oa' notes Peter S. Alterman. Feminising that religion and translating it to the Neanderthals has not helped Golding to any more optimistic a conclusion about the truth or comfort of religion; but it has given form to a wholesome, maternal deity that inspired Lovelock in an important attempt to reverse some of the more damaging errors of real, contemporary modern human beings.[lxii]

Conclusion

In representing old gods and goddesses of the Palaeolithic to Neolithic periods, British writers from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century thus created a wide variety of religious practices and beliefs. Often they were hampered by their own reservations about the goodness or the existence of deities and/or by a mistrust of established religions. And in only

a few cases – Wallis, Mitchison and Golding most obviously – could it plausibly be said that any of the religions imagined in the new era of 'Pre-History' had positive value. All these visions (Deh-Yan, the Spring Queen and Corn King and Oa) feature goddesses, pointing the way to developments in modern pagan religion which did not coalesce until the 1950s, and did not become well-known until the 1980s, as Hutton documents in his *Triumph of the Moon*. As this article has further shown, both obscure and canonical prehistoric fiction precedes pagan fact. Writers of science fiction turned to prehistory to explore their options in a world where orthodox Christianity seemed to be dying. And the contrast between the few, influential, stories of early goddess worship and the mass of prehistoric god-based fiction is instructive. Apart from these few brighter tales of feminine religiosity, the prehistoric fiction of the 1890s to 1960s created a dark, saddening literature of uncertainty and unanswered questions. There was no replacement of the Christian Eden, no paradise to lose. Writers who imagined new old masculine deities could see nothing better than competing species scuffling in the dark and melting ice gods.[lxiii]

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[i] John Lubbock, *Pre-Historic Times* (London, 1865) 1; Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture* 2 vols. (London, 1871), vol. 1:3.

[ii] John Lubbock, *The Origin of Civilisation* (London, 1870) 1. On Tylor and Lubbock see Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3-4, and *Blood and Mistletoe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 297-9 and on stratification, Gilliam Bennett, 'Geologists and Folklorists: Cultural Evolution and the Science of Folklore' *Folklore* 105 (1994): 25-37. On anthropology in the period, Henrika Kuklick, *The Savage Within: The Social History of British Anthropology 1885-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[iii] James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A New Abridgement* ed. Robert Fraser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 46-59. This edition is preferred because it is reinserts controversial passages omitted from the usually-consulted abridgement. For its editorial strategy see Fraser's 'Note on the Text'. On Frazer's changing views see Hutton, *Triumph*, 114-16; Adam Stout, *Creating Prehistory* (Oxford@ Blackwell, 2008), 118-19. On the myth-ritualists, Robert Ackerman, *The Myth and Ritual School: J.G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) and a reader, *the Myth and Ritual Theory* ed. Robert A Segal (Oxford and Malden MA: Blackwell, 1998).

[iv] Frazer, *Golden Bough,* 62-5, 511. Jerome K. Jerome, *Three Men in a Boat* (1889; London: Penguin, 1999) and George and Weedon Grossmith, *Diary of a Nobody* (1888-9 in serial form in *Punch*; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[v] Frazer, *Golden Bough,* 11, 13, 18.
[vi] Frazer, *Golden Bough,* 153, 166, 173-81, 228-31. For the sacrificial victim as cementing community identity, Frazer drew on William Robertson Smith, to whom he dedicated his book, especially once it was published and in later editions of *The Golden Bough*, *The Religion of the Semites* (London, 1894).
[vii] Frazer, *Golden Bough,* 387-9.
[viii] 'The theory that Christ was put to death, not as a criminal, but as the annual representative of a god, whose counterparts were well known all over Western Asia, may help to explain his early deification and the rapid spread of his worship' Frazer carefully suggested. But even this marginal note was so inflammatory that Frazer and his wife Lilly cut it from their abridgement of 1922, gutting *The Golden Bough* of one of its central conclusions; Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 674; Fraser, ed., 'Introduction' xli.
[ix] Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* 2nd. Ed. (1912; London: Merlin, 1962), xix, 494. See also *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). On Harrison more generally, Annabel Robinson, *The Life and Work of Jane Ellen Harrison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Mary Beard, *The Invention of Jane Harrison* rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Hutton, *Triumph*, 37, 124; Sandra J. Peacock, *Jane Ellen Harrison: The Mask and the Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).
[x]Margaret Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1921), 19, 12; see Carolyn Oates and Juliette Wood, *A Coven of Scholars* (London: FLS Books, 1998), Jacqueline Simpson. 'Margaret Murray: Who Believed Her and Why', *Folklore* 105 (1994): 89-96 and Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (1976; London: Pimlico, 1999) for critiques of Murray's witch theory, and as an archaeologist Margaret S. Drower, 'Margaret Alice Murray' in *Breaking New Ground* ed. Getzel M. Cohen and Martha Sharp Joukowsky, eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 109-41.
[xi] J.G. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910; London: Macmillan, 1935) and *Golden Bough*; Andrew Lang, below and see also *The Secret of Totem* (London: Longman and Green, 1905).
[xii] Freud thought Tylor, Lubbock and earlier writers overlooked the sexual aspect of early life in particular (*Totem and Taboo* (1913 in German; 1918; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1942), 18 and Frazer certainly shied away from discussion in later editions of his work.
[xiii] Freud, *Totem*, 27-9.
[xiv] Freud, *Totem*, 81-2, 14, 104-4, 107, 184-139, where Freud cites Frazer and Robertson Smith.
[xv] Nicholas Ruddick, *The Fire in the Stone: Prehistoric Fiction from Charles Darwin to Jean M. Auel* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009), 26.
[xvi] Andrew Lang, The Romance of the First Radical' (1880) at http://www.trussel.com/prehist/lang.htm, part of an invaluable resource on prehistoric fiction. Accessed 23 July 2010.
[xvii] Julie Sparks, 'At the Intersection of Victorian Science and Fiction: Andrew Lang's 'Romance of the First Radical'', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 42 (1999): 125-142
[xviii] H.G. Wells, 'A Story of the Stone Age' (1897) published serially in *The Idler* and accessed 14 January 2011 at: http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/10821/.
[xix]Rudyard Kipling, 'In the Neolithic Age' (1892) accessed 3 March 2011 at: http://www.kipling.org.uk/poems_neolithic.htm.

[xx] Rudyard Kipling, *Rewards and Fairies* (London: Macmillan, 1910) accessed 6 April 2011 at http://www.gutenberg.org/files/556/556-h/556-h.htm#2H_4_0001.
[xxi] Henry Rider Haggard, *Allan and the Ice-Gods* ed. David Pringle (Polegate: Pulp Fictions, 1999), 33, 230, 50, 259; Pringle, 'Introduction' to the above, v-xii.
[xxii] Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilization 1919-39* (London: Penguin, 2010).
[xxiii] Sydney Fowler Wright, *Dream* (London: George Harrap, 1931) accessed 3 October 2010 at: http:www.trussel.com/prehist/dream.htm; Fowler Wright, chapter 30.
[xxiv] Fowler Wright's story in particular rambles and is hard to follow. In a review of his *Deluge*, Kincaid describes him as having 'a talent for digression' and 'baroque linguistic curlicues' (Paul Kincaid, '*Apres Moi*', *Science Fiction Studies* 32 (2005): 213-17). On *Dream* see Mary S. Weinkauf, *Sermons in Science Fiction: The Novels of S. Fowler Wright* (San Bernardino, CA: Borgo, 1994), 71-3.
[xxv] Grant Allen, *The Evolution of the Idea of God* (London, 1897); Frank Jevons, *An Introduction to the History of Religion* (1897; London: Methuen, 1902) and later in *The Idea of God in Early Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910). Lang, 'Introduction', *The Making of Religion* 2nd. Ed. (1900; accessed 14 January 2011 at: http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/12353/pg12353.html), based on the Gifford Lectures. Romans 1:19. On Lang, Stout, *Creating Prehistory,* 118-19.
[xxvi] Patrick Parrinder, 'H.G. Wells' *ODNB*, accessed 15 March 2012 at: http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/article/36831; Willis B. Glover, 'Religious Orientations of H. G. Wells: A Case Study in Scientific Humanism', *The Harvard Theological Review* 65:1 (January 1972): 117-35.
[xxvii] H.G. Wells, *First and Last Things: A Confession of Faith and Rules of Life* (New York: Putnam, 1908), 66-7. H.G. Wells, *God the Invisible King* (London: Cassell, 1917) accessed 19 April 2012 at: http://www.online-literature.com/wellshg/invisibleking/ 150-55, 84; Glover 122-8, 132; William Archer, *God and Mr. Wells* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1917), 32; for the controversy with Belloc see Hilaire Belloc, *A Companion to Mr Wells'* Outline of History (London: Sheed and Ward, 1926); Wells, *Mr. Belloc Objects* (London: Watts and Co., 1926); Belloc, *Mr Belloc Still Objects* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1926).
[xxviii] Kipling, *Rewards and Fairies*; see Charles Allen, 'Ruddy's Search for God; The Young Kipling and Religion', *The Kipling Journal* 83: 332 (June, 2009): 23-37, John J. Salessis, 'God and Allah in the Works of Rudyard Kipling', *Forum on Public Policy* (2009) accessed 4 April 2010 at: http://forumonpublicpolicy.com/summer09/archivesummer09/salesses.pdf ; Warren S. Archibald, 'Religion in Some Contemporary Poets', *The Harvard Theological Review* 7:1 (January 1914): 60; Edmund Wilson, 'The Kipling that Nobody Read' (1941) in *Kipling's Mind and Art: Selected Critical Essays* ed. Andrew Rutherford (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), 17-69, especially 18-20. Kipling stated that *Puck of Pook's Hill* (London: Macmillan, 1906) and *Rewards and Fairies* were to be read by children before the readers realised they were meant for adults (*Something of Myself* quoted in Lisa A.F. Lewis, ''References', 'Cross-References' and 'Notions of History' in Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies*', *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920* 50 (2007): 192.
[xxix] Archbishop Rowan Williams explores these tensions in a sermon to mark the 70th anniversary of Kipling's death, accessed 12 February 2012 at: http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1604/rudyard-kipling-sermon.
[xxx] Sydney Fowler Wright, *Deluge* ed. Brian Stableford (1928; Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003).
[xxxi] Stableford 'Introduction' to *Deluge* l-lii; Stableford, Foreword to *S. Fowler Wright's Short Stories* accessed 24 November 2011 at: http://www.sfw.org/bsforeword.shtml. See the

story ‘Choice’ (1932) for the full bleakness of his vision. Weinkauf, *Sermons*13. For a calmer view of the atheist Palaeolithic see Raymond Williams’ *People of the Black Mountains* vol. 1 (1989; London: Paladin, 1990).

[xxxii] Hutton, *Triumph*, 151-2. The Haggard family had Danish roots, hence the Norse interest.

[xxxiii] John Senior, ‘Spirituality in the Fiction of Henry Rider Haggard’ (PhD. Diss., Rhodes University, 2003), 264-8.

[xxxiv] H. Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life* (1926; Teddington: Echo Library, 1990), 153; Patrick Brantlinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 171. In *She*, Ayesha explains to Quatermain that Isis, Aphrodite and so on are principles of nature, but he does not believe her (London, 1887; Senior 278). Senior describes Haggard’s entire output as driven by ‘the fear of a finite world of death and oblivion, born of rational scientific thought’ and ultimately finding no comfort in religion (291). Contextually see also Morton Cohen, *Rider Haggard, His Life and Works* (London: Macmillan, 1968) and Peter Ellis, *H. Rider Haggard: A Voice from the Infinite* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1978).

[xxxv] Ashton Hilliers, *The Master-Girl* (London: Methuen, 1910), 18, 21, 90, 40, 225-6, 241.

[xxxvi] See also Nicholas Ruddick, ‘Courtship with a Club: Wife-Capture in Prehistoric Fiction 1865-1914’. *Yearbook of English Studies* (2007), accessed 8 January 2011 at: http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Courtship+with+a+Club%3a+wife-capture+in+prehistoric+fiction%2c+1865-1914-a0167030905).

[xxxvii] It’s tempting to speculate that Wallis might have known Charles Godfrey Leland’s *Aradia*, since his Dianic religion has elements of Leland’s. See Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2007) chapter four for further discussion of *Aradia* and Leland’s influence in modern goddess religions as well as Hutton, *Triumph* 141-8.

[xxxviii] Frederick Britten Austin, *When Mankind was Young* (1927; Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1970), 9, 11, 23, 31.

[xxxix] Frederick Britten Austin, *Tomorrow* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1930), 2, 4-5, 6-7, 9-20, 17, 23-9. Her likeness to Isis is emphasised when she searches for her lover’s dismembered body and then mandates similar dismemberment for his murderer, her brother. Her lover is also her totemic brother, as Isis was Osiris’ sister.

[xl] Naomi Mitchison, *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* (1931; 1990; Edinburgh: Canongate, 2001), viii (new Preface), and another edition (London: Virago, 1983), 238, 240-1, 243, 245. For Mitchison on Lang see Jenni Calder, *The Nine Lives of Naomi Mitchison* (London: Virago, 1997), 5 and on Erif Der, 96-100. See also Jill Benton, *Naomi Mitchison: A Biography* (London; Rivers Oram/Pandora, 1990). Further contexts for Mitchison’s interest in paganism are her first novel, *The Conquered* (1923; London: Travellers’ Library, 1927) and *Early in Orcadia* (Colonsay: House of Lochar, 2000). E[rnest] Belfort Bax, ‘The Pagan Socialist’ *Justice* (4 May 1912), 10 accessed 6 May 2010 at: http://www.marxists.org/archive/bax/1912/05/pagansoc.htm. See also Belfort Bax, ‘Socialism and Religion’, *Justice* (21 June 1884) 2 accessed 6 May 2010 at: http://www.marxists.org/archive/bax/1884/06/religion.htm, with Frazerian emphasis on the incompatibility of Christian asceticism and social good but an insistence that religion and politics can be united, and an outright attack on Christian Socialism in ‘Unscientific Socialism’ *To-Day* (January-June 1884), 192-204 accessed 6 May 2010 at: http://www.marxists.org/archive/bax/1884/01/unscisoc.htm.

[xli] Edward Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure* (London, 1889) accessed 4 April 2010 at: http://www.archive.org/stream/civilizationits00carpgoog#page/n46/mode/2up.

[xlii] On Carpenter and his circle see Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (London: Verso, 2008) and Regenia Gagnier, 'Literary Alternatives to Rational Choice: Historical Psychology and Semi-Detached Marriages', *Occasion: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities* 1 (2009) accessed 17 November 2010 at: http://occasion.stanford.edu/node/30.
[xliii] H.G. Wells, 'The Grisly Folk' in *The Grisly Folk and The Wild Asses of the Devil* (1921; n.p.: Dodo Press, n.d), 1-2, 6. James Jasper Atkinson, 'Primal Law' in Andrew Lang and J.J. Atkinson, *Social Origins and Primal Law* (London: Longman Green, 1903).
[xliv] Both kinds of Diffusionist focused primarily on the Neolithic, but here their work is discussed in the context of the Palaeolithic because creative writers transported it there, lodging it uneasily alongside Neanderthals. A few tens of thousands of years is easily blurred away in creative fiction.
[xlv] Vere Gordon Childe, *The Dawn of European Civilization* (1925; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958); Grafton Elliot Smith, especially *The Ancient Egyptians and the Origin of Civilization* (London and New York: Harpers, 1911) and *The Diffusion of Culture* (London: Watts, 1930); William James Perry, *The Children of the Sun: A study in the Early History of Civilization* (New York: Dutton, 1923).
[xlvi] Grafton Elliot Smith, *Human History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1930), 73, 190.
[xlvii] I[drysyn] O[liver] Evans, *The Coming of a King* (London: Frederick Warne, 1950). As a children's book, this takes Perry and Smith's theories literally and goes through them step by step; Wells' *The Grisly Men* provides the depiction of Neanderthals as 'ogres' to be ruthlessly exterminated (Evans 255-6).
[xlviii] Henry Treece, *The Golden Strangers* (1956; London: Savoy Books, 1980), 14, 49, 96-9, 154, 196.
[xlix] Stout, *Creating Prehistory*, 72-89.
[l] Mitchell also and more famously wrote as Lewis Grassic Gibbon.
[li] J. Leslie Mitchell, *Three Go Back* (1932; London: Black Cat, 2006), 108, 72-3, 90, 97, 165, 99, 131, 158.
[lii] William Golding, *The Inheritors* (London: Faber, 1955), 9, 151, 167, 165-6, 168, 172.
[liii] Golding, *Inheritors*, 225, 173.
[liv] For the 'shaman' see Ronald Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the British Isles* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 10-13 and *Witches, Druids and King Arthur* (London and New York: Hambledon, 2003), 34. For Star Carr, excavated by Clark in 1949-51, see Grahame Clark, *Star Carr* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954) and http://www.starcarr.com/, accessed 27 December 2011.
[lv] Pronounced to rhyme with 'smoke', as Golding explains in John Carey, 'William Golding Talks to John Carey' in *William Golding: The Man and his Books* ed. John Carey (London: Faber, 1986), 188.
[lvi] Golding, *Inheritors*, 145-7, 128-9, 224-5.
[lvii] For a Freudian/Lacanian reading of Oa see Yasunori Sugimura, 'A Reconsideration of Oa the Earth Goddess in William Golding's *The Inheritors*' *The Modern Language Review* 97 (2002): 279-89. For discussions of the episode and Oa see also James Gindin, *William Golding* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 30-7; Bernard S. Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub, *The Art of William Golding* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1968), 43-72; John Peter, 'The Fables of William Golding' *The Kenyon Review* 19 (Fall 1957): 585; John Bowen, 'Bending Over Backwards' *Times Literary Supplement* (23 October 1959): 608; Frank Kermode, 'The Novels of William Golding' *International Literary Annual* 3 (1961): 19; Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, 'Approaches to *The Inheritors*' in *William Golding: Novels 1954-67* , ed. Norman Page (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985),122-5; and

Virginia Tiger, *William Golding: The Dark Fields of Discovery* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1974), 68-101.

[lviii] Carey, ed., *William Golding*, 178. Here Golding explains the death of the Neanderthal child, which many readers do not initially understand has happened.

[lix] Golding, *Inheritors*, 28, 33, 35, 54, 84, 30, 88-91.

[lx] Golding, *Inheritors*, 216-20.

[lxi] Golding, *Inheritors*, 195.

[lxii] Golding is not always so pessimistic, though prehistoric theology is mocked as pointless masculine time-wasting in 'Clonk Clonk', his novella of Palaeolithic Africa in *The Scorpion God* (London: Faber, 1971). See his comments on it in Carey, ed., *William Golding*, 184-5. Peter S. Alterman, 'Aliens in Golding's *The Inheritors Science Fiction Studies* 5 (1978): 8.

[lxiii] On the 'myth-ritual' theory and its parallel poetic influence in Modernism see J.B. Vickery, *The Literary Impact of* The Golden Bough (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973). On Celtic and Norse deities in fiction and poetry and the legacy of the ice gods after 1960 also my *Imagining the Pagan Past* (London and New York: Routledge, forthcoming 2013).